

THE FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE

by

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Abstract

Students have many opportunities to familiarize themselves with their college after committing to a school. Institutions offer summer orientation and enrollment sessions, and many also offer extended orientation sessions that may include spending time in the residence halls or outdoor camps and activities. Upon arrival to campus, first year students are given a great deal of information about campus resources, culture and traditions. They may also have welcome week activities, first year seminar classes, learning communities, specialized housing accommodations, and a wealth of other opportunities to connect to the university. The purpose of this report is to explore both the unique challenges facing first year students and the varying support structures in place for them.

To explore this topic, the unique needs facing first-year, residential students as it relates to student development and transition theories will be outlined. Focusing on institutional concerns, persistence will also be explored as a theoretical framework. Finally, to make this report relevant to Kansas State University, the first year programming efforts at twelve institutions will be synthesized and analyzed as a foundation for comparison. A proposal for potential programs at K-State will be presented.

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Dedication

This report is dedicated is to my parents, for their unwavering support of my education, my work and my decisions.

It is dedicated also to Will Chapman for sharing with me the passion for this work and service to students.

Finally, this report would not be possible were it not for the many faculty and staff who have invested in me wholly as a student and person.

My investment in other students is the only way I know to show my gratitude.

CHAPTER 1 - The First Year Experience: A History and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

First year students the greatest challenge to an institution and the livelihood of an institution. It is important to help these students in their transition to the university so they will have a positive experience and persist through graduation at their home institution. In this culture of expectation and high mobility, students are likely to leave an institution if they do not feel the benefits immediately. Also, approximately one half of all students transfer at least once in their college career (J. Henderson, personal communication, 2010). In order to help students through these transitions, many schools provide extensive first year programming including summer orientations and camps, week-long welcome festivities, special residence hall living accommodations, academic bridge programs and other opportunities to build relationships with peers, student leaders, university staff and faculty outside of the classroom. There is an increasing awareness that student success and satisfaction is just as much about the co-curricular and extra-curricular experience as it is about the classroom experience.

This report will look at a variety of first year programs designed to engage students and give them the tools to be successful and persist through their college career. To start, I will define key terms and review the literature with attention to the history of the first year experience. Theoretical foundations including student development theories, student success theories and persistence models will be explored, and the current programs and practices of twelve institutions will be looked at in detail. After reviewing the programs at the following

twelve institutions – Baylor University, Texas A&M, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Missouri, University of Colorado at Boulder, Colorado State University, University of Iowa, Iowa State University, University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, University of Kansas and Kansas State University – emerging themes and the theoretical rationale behind such programs will be discussed. Limitations will be outlined, and in conclusion, a proposal for a Kansas State University programming model will be offered.

Definitions

As first year programs are extensive and each school uses their own terminology, it is necessary to create a common understanding of terms which will be used frequently throughout this report. The terms are as follows:

Courses in Common- Students involved in courses in common take at least two of the same classes. Though classes may be large in size, the goal is to create a small population of students taking multiple classes together so they might connect both in and out of the classroom.

Faculty in residence – These faculty members have an apartment within the residence hall and work with residence life staff to design, implement and provide educational programs in the hall. Faculty members in residence have opportunities to interact with students more informally through their shared home space.

First year student - A traditionally aged, 17-19 years old, student who is entering the university for the first time and lives in the residence halls

First year program(s) - An all-encompassing term used to speak about all of the programs offered for first year students at a single institution.

First year seminar - A class designed for first year students to aid in their transition to college life. These courses may be taught by university faculty or staff, may have a student mentor, and may be focused on the academic transition or the personal transition to college.

Freshmen Interest Group (FIG) - A group of no more than 25 students taking between two and four courses together. One course will be a first year seminar and offer interdisciplinary connections between the other courses within the FIG. The purpose of FIGs is to demonstrate relationships between seemingly unrelated courses helping students to grow in their critical thinking skills; the program also gives students an opportunity to interact with faculty and build relationships with them through smaller classes. FIGs are also sometimes residential and have students living in proximity to one another within their residence hall.

Learning community - A group of students who take at least one class together and are grouped together by a common interest to enhance their university experience.

Living-learning community- A group of students who take at least one class together and are grouped together within their residence hall. These groupings may be isolated to a wing or floor of the building or students may live in the same hall and not be isolated to one area of the hall.

Persistence – This refers to degree completion (Astin, 1977; J. Henderson, personal communication, 2010; Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

Retention – This refers to the decision students make to return to a university for the following year of school (Astin, 1977; Tinto & Pusser, 2006; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). For the purposes of this report, retention will refer to the decision to return to an institution for a second year after the first full academic year on campus.

Student satisfaction – This is what students report as their overall level of fulfillment with their first year experience and the programs with which they have been involved.

Student Success – Student success has been defined by M. Lee Upcraft and John N. Gardner (1989) to include the following six elements:

- 1) Developing Academic and Intellectual Competence – Students should be confident in their abilities to engage and learn in the college academic environment.
- 2) Establishing and Maintaining Interpersonal Relationships – Students should have the ability to create platonic and romantic relationships.
- 3) Developing Identity – Students should be exploring who they are and who they want to be. This may happen through coursework, campus clubs and organizations or through peer relationships and self-exploration.
- 4) Deciding on a Career and Lifestyle – Students, through self-exploration, should explore and decide the type of career and lifestyle they wish to have post-graduation. This is an important aspect of self-exploration because if students' desires for career will not provide the means for the lifestyle they want, then the student may experience dissonance and need guidance.
- 5) Maintaining Personal Health and Wellness – College is an important time in students' lives where habits are created that have the likelihood of affecting them for the rest of their lives. Students should be forming healthy habits and taking care of themselves.
- 6) Developing an Integrated Philosophy of Life – Students are away from home for the first time and have the opportunity to re-examine beliefs they have always

held true. Students will explore different philosophies and will hopefully find those that make sense for them throughout their first year and subsequent years. Upcraft and Gardner's six elements imply an institutional commitment to the students' holistic growth and development.

Review of the Literature

History of the Collegiate Freshmen Experience

The earliest first year students were victims of upperclassmen, subject to hazing, forced servitude of older classmates, and generally not well respected or cared for (Dwyer, 1989). Academically, freshmen were not given opportunities to engage in their coursework; rather, they were to listen and absorb information as it was transferred from professors. Students could only move on to new and more difficult subject matter when they were deemed ready by their professors, but first year students often struggled due to the inaccessibility of text books and resources. While these characteristics originated in Europe, they were common in early America as well. As early as 1640 in America, it was realized that these students needed guidance to help "ease the young man's transition from home to college" (Dwyer, 1989, p. 30). Though freshmen advisors were selected, they were not trained and the university system still had a great deal to learn about first year students and their unique needs.

Ninety years after the first freshmen advisors were put into place at Harvard the College Customs were institutionalized as part of the University freshmen initiation (Dwyer, 1989). The Customs, as they were genially referred to, were a series of statements which indebted new freshmen to sophomores and other upperclassmen, and were read to the entering class each year. In the 1770s, Harvard faculty opposed the Customs and though

initially unsuccessful, they did weaken the enforcement of them and offered the first recorded protection for freshmen students. It took an additional 130 years for freshmen at Harvard to be spared initiation, more commonly referred to as “hell week” (Dwyer, 1989). Shortly after the Customs were eliminated, a board of freshman advisors (FAs) made up of caring faculty who “sought to institutionalize their responsibilities beyond the classroom, and the freshmen certainly received better orientation, advice counsel, and social events as a result” (Dwyer, 1989, p. 33). These were the earliest stages of orientation and the freshmen advisory council at Harvard realized that orientation was necessary to help students adjust. It was very obvious students did not know how to behave on campus, did not understand the expectations of them, did not have sound decision making skills, nor was their peer group offering guidance and support. The FAs at Harvard outlined three specific points for orientation which are listed and explained below:

- 1) Students did not know how to be students when they arrived to campus – there was recognition that moving into a residential college was a huge life adjustment. Students in this situation were in need of guidance, and not in need of the manipulation and torture currently directed at them.
- 2) Freshmen’s choices were more complex –living independently for the first time brought with it more decisions in all aspects of life. Freshmen were bombarded with choices ranging from when and if to do their laundry, who to socialize with, and what course of study was a good fit. Of course, some of these things were decided for them; courses of study were often decided by the professor or the college.
- 3) Peer culture was not enough to help freshmen adapt and be successful – given the tendency of upper-class students to torture freshmen and to put them in positions of

servitude, it became clear that these social networks were not helping students adjust. More action, especially from faculty, needed to be taken to ensure freshmen would have a chance to succeed.

Since Harvard and other early institutions worked to orient these young students to campus, academics, culture and peer networks, first year students have become the subject of much research and debate. The earliest first year challenges were identified as academic adjustment, social adjustment, changes in one's finances, and changes in one's time management abilities. Initially these concerns were addressed in a parental fashion with strict rules and guidelines; however, universities have moved away from in loco parentis and now work to give students the tools they need to manage these adjustments on their own.

However, much research (e.g. Astin, 1977; Kuh, 2007; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989) still indicates that first year students need guidance and benefit from living in an environment that addresses their unique needs. Dwyer (1989) writes, freshmen and sophomore students, "who are chronologically and psychologically immature, who are often bewildered and befuddled by the complexities and wonders of the world, and are suddenly facing problems on which they seriously need guidance" (p. 38) can have a more effective, enhanced and satisfactory experience if they are placed in an environment designed to help them navigate these complexities and problems.

History of Orientation Programs

The earliest orientation programs were part of the recruitment process and run by the university admissions office on an individualized basis for prospective students (Ulmer, 1987). For the university, programs helped enhance admissions, grow the student body and retain the student population. For students, orientation provided opportunities to tour campus,

visit residence halls and dining facilities, and meet faculty, staff and current students. When institutions realized individual visits could be organized into a single program for prospective students, orientation programs as they are known today began taking shape. Most programs were originally housed in the admissions office, which was a natural fit for them, but some programs were run from the campus student life office, counseling services or academic affairs. The office in which the orientation program was housed tended to give it their own slant, so student life orientations tended to focus on student living arrangements and campus activities, while counseling services had small group interactions and relationship building as a foundation of their programs. Orientation programs have grown from one-day sessions to overnight stays in the residence halls, multi-day camps and weeklong welcome activities. This is a huge change from the hell week (Dwyer 1989) Harvard freshmen experienced in the late 1800s.

History of First Year Seminars

Another program designed to aid first year students in their transition began at the University of South Carolina. University 101, originally an experimental program, started in 1972 and has changed the first year experience for over 80% of American institutions of higher education (University of South Carolina: University 101 Programs, History of the First Year Seminar and University 101 Program, 2002). The class's initial purpose was to build "trust, understanding, and open lines of communication between students, faculty, staff and administrators" and it was hoped that this might reduce the growing tensions on campus in reaction to the Vietnam War. In addition to this important and topical purpose, other goals for the course were as follows:

- 1) To help students to have more positive views and behaviors toward the University.

- 2) To retain students from their freshmen to sophomore year, and ultimately to aid them in persistence to graduation.
- 3) To aid students in understanding the many layered purpose of post secondary education and what the university offers.
- 4) To improve teaching across the university by creating a program for faculty development.

Since its inception, University 101 has shown positive returns. Students enrolled in these classes tend to do better academically (Barrio-Sotillo, Miller, Nagasaki, & Arguelles, 2009; Kuh, 2007; Lopez, 2010; Wiese, 2010) often have higher grade point averages and report higher levels of satisfaction with their institution than those who do not complete these courses.

History of First Year Halls and Freshmen Interest Groups

There are many different ways that institutions manage freshmen living environments, including first year residence halls, immersion into the wider residence hall system, and other, more aggressive programs which link coursework with the living environment. Much research (e.g., Braxton, 2003; Kuh, 2007) states that first year students do better with their transition to college in a more controlled environment that is less accessible to upper-class students. Many institutions offer first year living environments and require students to live on campus as it has been shown to improve students' satisfaction and success (Kuh, 2007; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989; J. Wiese, personal communication, 2010). To illustrate how early universities viewed the residence hall as an important factor in the transition, it is important to note that in 1914 Harvard build its first freshmen residence halls, committed to affordability, so all freshmen could benefit from the living environment and

social activities (Morrison, 1989, as cited in Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). A great deal of research has shown that freshmen living environments can be very beneficial for these new students in their adjustment period (e.g., Astin, 1977; Kuh, 2007; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989).

One unique residential experience being offered at the University of Oregon (UO) is called a freshmen interest group or a FIG (University of Oregon: First Year Programs, Freshmen Interest Groups, 2010). These FIGs consist of a group of 20-25 students who take three classes together and live together in the same residence hall. One of the courses is a first year seminar, but the other two may initially seem unrelated. For example, students might take Introduction to Ethnic Studies and History of Hip Hop Music in the “Hip Hop and Politics of Race FIG” (University of Oregon: First Year Programs, FIGs, All, 2010). These two courses will be brought together in the third class, which UO calls “College Connections”; the first year seminar course will be taught by one of the faculty teaching one of the academic courses who will work to connect the subject matter as well as to create a connection for UO students.

According to UO’s First Year Programs website (University of Oregon: First Year Programs, Freshmen Interest Groups, 2010):

Studies show that students who participate in a FIG achieve greater levels of academic success throughout their first year at the university. In addition to academic benefits, FIGs give new students the opportunity to make friends quickly and meet potential study partners. FIG students participate in social events, both with their fellow FIG members and other new students, and form friendships that may last throughout their college careers.

These results have helped to make FIGs a popular first year program that has spread to many institutions including the University of Missouri and soon to Kansas State University.

Freshmen interest groups are all based in academics and are committed to interdisciplinary studies and faculty involvement. Many FIGs also have the added benefit of a residential component which creates another opportunity for students to connect and for faculty to be involved.

Theoretical Framework

Relevant Student Development Theories

Several student development theories suggest that first year students are candidates for special attention. Nevitt Sanford's (1966) theory of challenge and support is perhaps the most basic but important foundation for all freshmen programs. Students grow and develop when they reach a state of optimal dissonance, meaning they experience discomfort but also have enough support to work through and grow from the initial discomfort. The first year of college is challenging in a number of ways, and one large challenge comes from living on one's own for the first time, learning to be self-sufficient, and being surrounded by a large group of one's peers. These discomforts are naturally occurring in the first year, so the institution need not create challenges; the institution should be providing the support to help students cope and grow.

In addition to Sanford's theory, Chickering and Reisser (1993) states that students must move through seven vectors in order to have fully developed throughout college. First year students will typically enter college in one of the first two vectors: developing competence or becoming autonomous. These students need time to gain awareness of their new environment in order to develop competence. Students who have familiarity and comfort

with their surroundings and are competent within the campus culture can then move into autonomy. Autonomy is characterized by removing one's self from the home-life and reinvesting in school-life. The process of reinvestment (Medalie, 1981) can be especially challenging for students as they may invest early in new and superficial relationships. Students also risk building close friendships and peer networks with others who may detract from their overall college experience because they lack the competence or autonomy to break the cycle.

A final student development theory that is especially relevant in discussing students' orientation to college is Schlossberg's transition theory (1995). A transition is defined as an "event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles" (p. 111). Starting college and moving into a residence hall is a hallmark event in a student's life, characterized by a major shift in relationships, routines, assumptions and roles. Schlossberg suggests four major factors – situation, self, support and strategies – which contribute to students' ability or inability to cope with an event or non-event. An example of an event would be transitioning into residential life, and a non-event might be hoping to join a fraternity, and not being initiated. Residential students have most likely chosen their situation, but that does not discount the fact it is challenging. It is important to consider the self and explore the students' characteristics that might help them to manage their situation without much institutional guidance or support. For example, a student who has shown resilience in the past displays characteristics that she or he may be able to cope with this change easier than others. Likewise, a student who excelled academically in high school is more likely to do well academically in college; on the other hand, a high school student who

was repeatedly in trouble for not staying on task might need guidance in the unstructured university system.

The last two factors – support and strategies – are the most applicable to first year students' transition. Universities do a great deal to aid students in these two regards, through things like orientation, residence hall living, campus organizations and programs. By creating a sense of belonging and supportive environment through orientation and residence hall programming, in which students are likely to find others encountering similar challenges, they are more likely to build a support network of peers who will be able to help them with future transitions. Additionally, the institution, through campus programs, strive to give students opportunities to manage and cope with change by creating situations to connect them with other students, staff, faculty and the wider university.

Relevant Persistence Theories

Upcraft and Gardner's (1989) definition of student success is accompanied with several steps institutions can take to create an "environment for student success" and posits that it is administrators' moral obligation to help students to grow into mature and capable adults. Some of their suggestions for creating this environment are to have support systems in place that both challenge and support first year students, to heavily involve faculty and staff members in first year students' lives both in and out of the classroom, to have specific goals and learning outcomes for first year students, to have both opportunities for and an expectation of student involvement, and to have a course dedicated to the first year transition.

Vincent Tinto and Brian Pusser (2006) believe that institutions must create a culture within which students are expected to succeed. Several of Upcraft and Gardner's (1989)

ideas overlap, but Tinto and Pusser's model is outlined in greater detail, as it is a model for the integration of theory and practice. Factors and institutional conditions are listed below:

- 1) Commitment- The institution must show that they care about student success and put resources toward the goal of increasing student success.
- 2) Expectations – The institution must communicate to the students that they are in an environment of high expectations through structured and unstructured interactions. Tinto uses academic advising as a structured opportunity to communicate high expectations to students. An unstructured opportunity would be an informal conversation about class and study habits between a student and staff member.
- 3) Support – Students must feel supported in the three areas of academics, social networking, and finances in order to be successful. Universities should offer services and programs to address these needs.
- 4) Feedback – Students need to know how they are progressing through their work in order to be successful. If they are not meeting expectations, they will not know they have to improve; if they are exceeding expectations, this needs to be communicated as well so that students can seek greater challenges. Feedback is also important for faculty to have an accurate picture of students who do not understand the material in their classes so they can adjust accordingly.
- 5) Involvement – This refers to both in and out of classroom involvement. If students are involved in their university, they are more likely to be committed to stay. Involvement is most important in the classroom, and opportunities to share and engage directly with peers and professors help students to be successful.

Overall, Tinto and Pusser's model (2006) suggests that the institutions must create a culture of expectation in order for students to be successful. This aligns nicely with Upcraft and Gardner's (1989) belief that the university must create opportunities for students to be successful.

In addition to students' success and growth, it is important to think about the ways in which the student experience affects the functioning of the university. Several theorists look at student persistence, but one of the most well known and oft utilized is Tinto's theory on student departure (1986, as cited in Braxton, 2003). Tinto states that students who are both academically and socially invested in their institution perform better and are more likely to persist through graduation. He outlines four perspectives detailing why students depart: economic, organizational, psychological and sociological. These four perspectives are outlined in greater detail below:

- 1) Economic- Students will do a cost-benefit analysis of their current student status.

If the outcomes will not be beneficial to them, especially as it relates to the immediate investment of time, energy and money, it is likely they will depart.

Students may also access immediate gratification through work, which would provide them with more money immediately, but most likely not for the long term (Becker, 1964, as cited in Braxton, 2003). Sometimes the appeal of immediate gratification and income is too great for students, and they depart. Though they might more money long term if they persist, sometimes the appeal of instant gratification is too great for students to stay.

- 2) Organizational- Students are affected by the daily functional operations of the institution. The size, admissions criteria, course requirements, student-to-faculty

ratio, and amount and quality of contact with faculty all play a role in students' success and experience. Students are also affected by institutional leaders, the ways in which communication occurs, especially as it relates to the speed of processing student requests and the overall administrative styles that students encounter.

3) Psychological Perspective- To better understand this perspective, it should be viewed as it relates to the individual and their environment:

- Individual Level – Students' success is related to their own psychological developmental levels and as well as their past performances in challenging situations. Braxton (2000) likens this to Tinto's (1986, as cited in Braxton, 2003) model that takes into account "student entry characteristics" as a large factor in student success, which is shown in figure A.1.
- Environmental – Students are also largely affected by the environment and climate of the campus. If students are able to meet and interact with like individuals and to build relationships and grow as people, they are more likely to be satisfied. In addition, Pace (1984, as cited in Braxton 2003) believes that student satisfaction, and thus likelihood of remaining at an institution, are directly affected by "friendliness, supportiveness, helpfulness and intellectual satisfaction" (p. 324).

4) Sociological – This perspective is also best understood in two parts:

- Cultural capital – Cultural capital refers to an unseen system in which some students are in and others are out based on an awareness of the system. Students who feel a fit at an institution, who naturally understand

the institutional culture, language, requirements for success, and expectations are likely to be more successful. Students who do not have cultural capital, typically including students from a non-majority group and especially first-generation students, are more likely to have challenges and may not know what resources are available to them. Even if they know resources exist, they may need guidance in connecting to and utilizing them.

- Student Culture – Students are impacted by the college atmosphere and peer expectations. When students enter college, they break away from home and family life and are often more influenced by their peer groups, causing student culture and peer expectations to play a large part in their adjustment. This is especially important as it relates to students who come from a different culture; the distance between students' home culture and the campus culture is sometimes too great, and if these students do not find a “cultural enclave” (p. 236) campus, they are more likely to struggle in the transition.

Tinto's model (1986, as cited in Braxton 2003) outlines several factors affecting student departure; it is helpful to understand reasons for departure when designing programs to decrease departure and to increase retention and persistence.

CHAPTER 2 - Review of First Year Programs

This section will explore the first year programs and services available at twelve institutions. These schools – Baylor University, Texas A&M, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), University of Missouri, University of Colorado at Boulder (CU), Colorado State University (CSU), University of Iowa (Iowa), Iowa State University (ISU), University of Oklahoma (Oklahoma), Oklahoma State University (OSU), University of Kansas (KU) and Kansas State University (K-State)– have been identified by Tamara Bauer (personal communication, 2010), former Assistant Director for New Student Programs at K-State, as peer institutions similar to K-State in student body, size and functionality.

The methods used to obtain an accurate and complete understanding of the programs at the aforementioned schools was as follows. I first researched the schools’ programs through their websites and available public information, looking at the information from the perspective of incoming student, parent and potential employee. Each school was then contacted for an informational interview with an administrator in their orientation or new student services offices. Unique programs, such as Colorado State University’s Key Communities merited additional research, so directors of programs like this, which are not under the office of orientation, were contacted as well. Seven out of twelve schools responded for informational interview requests; these schools have an additional section outlining their successes and future plans.

Baylor University

Baylor University has several programs in place to assist first year students in their transition to college life. They offer traditional summer orientation sessions in June. Also, the University offers Baylor Line Camp, an extended orientation program designed to help

students learn the physical layout of campus, Baylor traditions, and gain a sense of belonging at Baylor, is offered in July. Students also have the option of living on or off campus, but on-campus living is encouraged. First year students are required to take University 1000 in their first semester and they have the option to participate in Freshmen Class Council. Through Campus Living & Learning students can also take part in an Engaged Learning Group and potentially work and socialize with one of the nine Faculty in Residence.

Summer Orientation

Baylor offers 11 two-day orientation sessions throughout the month of June which are focused on academics, advising and transitioning into college according to their current Coordinator of New Student Programs, Karen Hall (personal communication, 2010). Orientation is not required but it is strongly encouraged, and 85% of incoming students attend; the remaining 15% of students are advised via phone. While Hall would like to see all students come to orientation in person, she recognizes that not all students can come to orientation for various reasons.

Baylor Line Camp

Line Camp is a five-day, four-night program for incoming students to familiarize them with the University campus and traditions (K. Hall, personal communication, 2010). This program is optional but very popular with students; in 2009, the sixth year of the program, 40% of the incoming class attended. Line Camp began as an off-site program called The Adventure designed to create and build strong relationships for new students. It has evolved into a way to pass traditions from class to class and instill a sense of pride and belonging in new Baylor students. Since Line Camp is more closely tied to the traditions of the University and belonging at Baylor, it was moved to campus a few years ago. By

partnering with Campus Living & Learning, the Office of New Student Programs has been able to keep the cost of Line Camp to a very reasonable \$75 per student making it accessible to more students.

Over the course of the five days, students will attend a variety of workshops to help them acclimate to campus. They will be assigned to a small group leader who will take them to each session, eat meals with them, walk their class schedules with them, and guide them through their Line Camp Experience. Hall (personal communication, 2010) explained that each session of Line Camp had very specific learning outcomes for students. A few examples she gave are the following:

- “At the end of the opening Line Camp Mixer, incoming students will be able to identify their Line Camp Leader, state the purpose of Line Camp and connect to other student leaders.”
- “At the end of the first night’s dinner, incoming students will be able to identify and name each person at their table. They will also be able to articulate the rules and expectations of line camp.”

By having such intentional and structured outcomes Hall and is able to ensure that Line Camp Leaders are properly trained and that they have a clear understanding of their purpose as group leaders.

University 1000

University 1000 is Baylor’s first year seminar course; there is also a transfer equivalent called BU 1000 (What is University 1000/BU 1000, 2010). This course is required for first year students, and its purpose is to help students in their transition to life at Baylor. By focusing on the new expectations and personal reasonability as it relates to decision

making and academics, the class strives to offer both education and support to new students. To achieve these goals, the course provides structured opportunities to connect with other students and faculty and offers opportunities for self exploration.

Baylor Freshmen Class Council

First year students have an opportunity to serve their peers on the Baylor Freshmen Class Council (K. Hall, personal communication, 2010) which is a small group of first year students who work with the Office of New Student Programs to provide feedback and insight into their experience. These students also plan and execute two or three large scale events for their peers in the freshmen class each semester.

First Year Residence Halls

The first year residence halls at Baylor are traditionally styled and staffed. They are still developing and will soon have faculty in residence, as Baylor is making this transition for all their halls (Hall, personal communication, 2010). In the future, all new students will live in a traditional first year hall or in a living-learning community.

Faculty in Residence

Since 2004, Baylor has been working to have Faculty in Residence in their halls to create an environment of learning through all aspects of campus. The faculty in residence program encourages and maximizes the quality and quantity of faculty-student interactions by having faculty members live in apartments located within the residence halls. Faculty in the program have a unique perspective on student life and opportunities to interact with students in learning outside the classroom (Baylor University: Campus Living and Learning, Faculty Involvement, 2010).

There are currently nine faculty in residence, and the University is working to increase that so that all halls have a faculty member in residence. Traditional first year halls will be the last to receive faculty in residence because the program requires a great deal of physical building renovation, and first year halls have sufficient other programs and staff in place to support their students (K. Hall, personal communication, 2010). In addition to the faculty in residence program, Baylor has a Faculty Partners program, where all residence halls are connected with a faculty liaison who often dines in the hall with students and hosts programs or leads study groups in the hall. The purpose of faculty partners is to provide another opportunity for informal contact between faculty and students.

Engaged Learning Groups

Engaged Learning Groups (ELG) are “an innovative living-learning initiative aspiring to increase student learning in a challenging yet supporting environment” (Baylor University: Engaged Learning Groups at Baylor, 2010). Engaged Learning Groups are based in academics, so students take three interdisciplinary courses together and work closely with a faculty member. The students also work with the faculty outside of class through field trips, study groups and social activities. Two goals of the Engaged Learning Groups are to create a community of learners outside of the classroom and to connect students to one another and to faculty.

One unique feature of Engaged Learning Groups is the faculty in residence program. Not all ELG faculty live in hall, and not all faculty in residence work with an ELG, but the programs often intersect. Non-faculty in residence also collaborate with faculty in residence to offer programs in the hall for their ELG (K. Hall, personal communication, 2010). Another unique aspect of Baylor’s ELG is the first year seminar which is spread over three semesters.

Students take it for both semesters of the first year and the fall semester of the second year; they will not receive any credit for the course if they do not take it for all three semesters. By requiring this course over multiple semesters, Baylor increases the likelihood that their faculty and staff will build more meaningful relationships with students; such relationships improve student success and satisfaction.

Successes and Future Plans at Baylor

Baylor has enjoyed great success, student participation and growth in their programs. According to Karen Hall (personal communication, 2010), Coordinator of New Student Programs and former First Year Residence Hall Director, they are striving to become a “more seamless operation.” In her current role, Hall is concerned that after summer orientation and Line Camp, their office has little or no contact with students unless students actively seek them out through leadership positions available through their office. She is confident that the programming occurring in the residence halls meets the needs of the students, but her goals are to make the first year experience more collaborative and complete for the students they serve.

Texas A&M

Texas A&M offers several programs to help incoming students with their adjustment to their new life as an Aggie. Students are required to participate in a New Student Conference, which is the A&M version of orientation. Students may also choose to attend one of the several extended orientation options offered by various offices on campus. Upon arrival, both new and returning students are welcomed to campus with Gig ‘Em Week. First year students have the choice to live on campus and may also choose to participate in a living-learning community based on a shared interest or their first year class standing.

Students can also choose to enroll in a first year seminar class which will help them in their academic and personal transition.

New Student Conferences

New Student Conferences (NSC) are available several times throughout the summer to accommodate different students' schedules (Texas A&M: New Student Conferences, Orientation, 2010). One interesting feature of A&M's orientation structure is that not all colleges participate in all orientation days, so students must be aware of this when choosing a session to attend. The information is readily available on the NSC website, and there are systematic checks in place to ensure a student does not come on a day that their intended academic program will not be present (New Student Conferences Brochure, 2010). At New Student Conferences, participants receive academic advising and are able to enroll in their classes for the fall.

Extended Orientation Programs

In addition to the mandatory New Student Conferences, incoming students can choose to attend an extended orientation program before the start of the school year (New Student Conferences: Orientation, 2010). These programs are longer, include an overnight component, and are run through various offices on campus. All programs, though run through varying offices, are centered on building relationships and connecting with other Aggies. The programs are outlined below:

- *ExCEL* - ExCEL is run through the Department of Multicultural affairs and works to guide students in their transition with a focus on personal and academic balance.

- *Fish Camp* - This program is run through the Office of Student Activities. It is four days at an off-campus location and aims to give participants a strong peer network before they arrive on campus in the fall.
- *Transfer Camp (T-Camp)* - Transfer Camp, also known as T-Camp, is also sponsored by the Office of Student Activities. It has many of the same elements of Fish Camp, but it is for transfer students only.
- *Howdy Camp* - This program is run for students by students. It takes place in January to help mid-year incoming students with their transition to A&M. It has many of the same features of Fish Camp, Transfer Camp and ExCEL, but it takes place in January.
- *Impact* - This orientation program is run through the campus religious organization by the same name. Its purpose is to help first year students build relationships with other students who are exploring their faith.
- *Gig 'Em Week (Aggieland's Week of Welcome)* - Gig 'Em Week is the official kick-off to the start of the school year (Texas A&M: Offices of the Dean and Student Life, Gig 'Em Week, 2010). Both new and returning students are welcomed and encouraged to attend the events to reacquaint themselves with the University.

Learning Communities

Aggie Access is a living-learning community system of 400 first year students to help them connect to the University through shared courses, service learning opportunities, mentorship, and residence hall programs (Texas A&M: Residence Hall Handbook, 2010). In addition to Aggie Access, there are several other learning communities at Texas A&M. One

of the newest learning communities is the First Year Aggies Community, which is for new students and focuses on “Empowerment of Students, Academic Success, Global Mindedness, Leadership Development, Ethical Decision Making and Service Learning” (Texas A&M: Residence Hall Handbook, 2010). Other communities are available based on shared social and academic interests.

First Year Seminars

First year seminars at Texas A&M are 15-person classes structured to assist students in their transition to college (Texas A&M: First Year Seminar Course Guidelines, 2010). The learning outcomes for these courses are as follows: “By the end of the course students will have:

- Identified and articulated her his educational goals.
- Distinguished facts from opinions.
- Identified unanswered questions.
- Articulated her/his own opinion.
- Articulated the principles of reflective writing.”

By having such clearly defined learning outcomes, students and instructors alike have an understanding of what to expect from one another and should be better able to articulate the value of their experiences within the class. Instructors of the FYS courses may be staff or faculty, and it is expected that the coursework will be based in their own discipline while pursuing the aforementioned outcomes. It is also expected that opportunities for group work and “interactive learning” based on Baxter Magolda’s “Learning Partnerships Model” will be made an integral part of the course structure (Texas A&M: Undergraduate Studies, First Year Seminar Course Syllabus, 2010).

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

University of Nebraska-Lincoln requires students to attend summer enrollment days and offers four optional summer camps for students to participate in depending on their interests. Camps are optional and vary in price based on interest and location and are very popular with students. Power Up Red is a general interest camp to help students learn the culture and traditions at UNL. The other camps are very specifically geared toward a particular interest, such as getting an academic head start with NU Start, enjoying the great outdoors with NU Adventure, or connecting with other Engineering students in N.U.B.E. camp. In addition to camp, all first year students are guaranteed on-campus housing, and on campus living is required for first year students; therefore, they can choose to be involved in a residential learning community (University of Nebraska-Lincoln: University Housing, 2010).

New Student Enrollment

New student enrollment is required at the University of Nebraska and takes place over the summer (University of Nebraska-Lincoln: New Student Enrollment, 2010). Students must pay a \$10 fee and attend sessions related to academic transition and success before enrolling in classes.

Summer Camps

University of Nebraska offers summer camp opportunities for entering students to meet other new students and camp counselors who have a common interest. The four camps are listed and described in greater detail below.

- Power Up Red Weekend - Power Up Red Weekend is a newer initiative designed to make new students feel welcome and proud to be a Husker (University of Nebraska-

Lincoln: New Student Enrollment: Power Up Weekend, 2010). It includes three nights and four days on campus with other new students and student staff leaders. Participants learn the rich culture and traditions of being a student at UNL. Unlike new student enrollment, the activities are social in nature, as their purpose is to create connection and a sense of belonging for new students.

- NU Start - NU Start is a unique residential program that allows students to move into the halls three weeks before the official start of school and to learn how to be a successful UNL student (University of Nebraska-Lincoln: New Student Programs: NU Start, 2010). Participants live in their fall residence hall assignment, earn three hours of undergraduate general education credit, and get a head start on college life. Students take classes and attend sessions designed to help build relationships and to learn time management and study skills.
- Power Up Adventure Orientation - This unique program has many of the same goals as Power Up weekend except students spend six days backpacking in Colorado rather than staying on campus (University of Nebraska: Campus Recreation: About Power Up Adventure, 2010). This program costs students \$395 but is still popular; it teaches students about life as a Husker and gives them an appreciation for the outdoors and a balanced and healthy lifestyle.
- N.U.B.E. Camp - The Nebraska Undergraduates Becoming Engineers camp is two-day, one-night camp for students in Engineering (University of Nebraska-Lincoln: College of Engineering, N.U.B.E. Camp, 2010). This program costs students \$50 and is held at an off-campus location; the 24 hours are full of team building activities and

opportunities to build lasting friendships with classmates in a common academic discipline as well as opportunities to interact with faculty in the department.

Learning Communities

Learning communities at UNL are for first year residents only and participants share at least two classes (University of Nebraska-Lincoln: Learning Communities, 2010).

Residents live together in their own area of the residence halls and because the classes fulfill University general education requirements, undeclared students are welcomed and encouraged to participate. To help support these programs, UNL does charge a \$95 fee for participation which subsidizes some of the out of class experiences.

University of Missouri

The University of Missouri, according to Jeff Wiese, Coordinator of Freshmen Interest Groups, does not have an all-encompassing first year experience office but there are several programs in place to aid new students in their transition (personal communication, 2010). Some individual colleges offer first year seminar courses for their students. Campus wide, Missouri requires all first year students live in University-affiliated property; one opportunity available to those living in halls is to participate in a residential freshmen interest group, also known as a FIG. Though participation is not required, Jeff Wiese (personal communication, 2010), says it is strongly encouraged and very popular with students. Last year, approximately 1900 students participated, which was 25% of their incoming first year class.

Orientation

Orientation at Missouri (University of Missouri, New Student Programs, 2009) consists of welcome workshops, advising appointments, and learning sessions over the course of two days. Students and their families are strongly encouraged to attend and to learn what to expect when they arrive to campus in the fall. A concurrent session is offered for parents as well.

Freshmen Interest Groups

The University of Missouri has been offering freshmen interest groups for fifteen years (J. Wiese, personal communication, 2010). FIGs are made up of 15-20 students and offer an interdisciplinary learning experience. Students live in close proximity to one another in their residence hall, but they are not isolated to one floor or wing within the building. The goal of FIGs is to help first year students to connect early to the University through relationships with their peers, with their peer advisor (PA) and with their faculty mentor. Wiese said that FIGs are so popular at Missouri they fill up within two weeks of the opening of registration and typically have a waiting list until the start of school in August.

The student staff who help with FIGs are called peer advisors (PAs). They are upper-class students who have demonstrated academic success and leadership and choose to guide new students in their transition to life at Missouri. They work alongside resident assistants in the residence halls to create a welcoming environment for FIG students, and they also work closely with FIG faculty. Faculty teaching in the FIG program are volunteers from a variety of disciplines; their only compensation from the University is a free shirt and \$500 in professional development funds. Coordinator of FIGs Wiese (personal communication, 2010) said that they frequently have a waiting list for faculty involvement, and it is part of the

culture at Missouri that professors take an active role in students' lives outside of the classroom.

The functioning of a FIG is as follows. The 15-20 students take four classes together. One of these classes is a one credit hour FIG course which is similar to a first year seminar and is co-taught by a PA and FIG faculty, who is also teaching one of the other three courses. The PA typically leads the FIG course with the support of faculty, allowing the PA to have her or his own benefit of leadership development. The other three classes that students take together fulfill a general education requirement, and the FIG faculty work to help students see the interdisciplinary connections between their courses.

Successes and Future Plans at University of Missouri

When talking about the success of the FIG program at Missouri, Wiese (personal communication, 2010) stated that FIG participants have higher grade point averages, higher retention from freshmen to sophomore year, and persist through graduation at higher rates in four and six years than non-FIG participants. He is most proud of these students' residual grade point averages, which is the difference between their anticipated grade point average based on their high school scores, and their earned freshmen grade point average. He has found that over fifteen years these residual grade point averages are consistently positive at higher rates for FIG participants than for their non-FIG counterparts. Students also report higher rates of satisfaction with their overall university experience, and three-quarters of FIG participants recommend the program to their peers. In addition to student success and satisfaction, Wiese attributes a great deal of FIG success to the culture of Missouri, in which faculty are not only expected but want to take an active role in students' lives outside the

classroom. Because of their great success and the faculty and student involvement, it is likely the program could be expanded in the future.

University of Colorado at Boulder

The University of Colorado at Boulder (CU) requires new students to attend a two-day, one-night summer orientation session. If students do not register or come to an orientation session, their account automatically goes into late enrollment, and they are charged a fee. The rationale for requiring orientation is to help students connect to CU and to their peers. Kristen Creamer (personal communication, 2010), Assistant Director of Orientation, said that it is good for the students to spend time in the residence halls before they come to campus, and for the few students who do not live on campus, it is especially good for them to have seen and begun to understand life in the halls. On-campus living is required for all first year students, and space is guaranteed space for these students. Colorado also has living-learning communities and residential academic programs available for their residents. While these programs are not strictly for freshmen, due to their first year live on requirements and space limitations, it is rare that an upper-class student would be a member of these communities.

Summer Orientation

University of Colorado students are required to attend one of ten summer orientation sessions that are offered throughout the summer (K. Creamer, 2010). These sessions are two days long with the overnight component being mandatory. During the days, students have workshops and lectures about academic success, adjusting to life at CU, campus resources and other similar topics. Students stay in the residence halls on campus, and a student staff of

evening orientation leaders come to the halls from 4:00 pm to midnight to have dinner with incoming students and to participate in both structured and unstructured social opportunities.

Welcome Week Activities

The University of Colorado offers students several days of activities leading up to the start of classes. Activities include a casino night in the recreation complex, outdoor concerts and cookouts, student organization fairs and residence hall programs (J. Henderson, personal communication, 2010). In addition to the pre-semester welcome week, CU offers three additional week-long programs early in the semester to help students get connected. Involvement Week takes place during the first week of classes and gives students the opportunity to explore various campus clubs and activities across campus. The following week is called Culture Week and exposes students to different multicultural organizations and study abroad opportunities. The third week of welcome activities is called Academic Week, which is sponsored by the different academic departments and academic advisors to help students learn study tips and resources for academic success at CU. These weeks of activities are followed shortly thereafter by homecoming and family weekend, and they help new students to get connected early.

Living Learning Communities

Living learning communities at CU are based on a common interest that is typically not academic in nature (J. Henderson, personal communication, 2010). Unlike the residential academic programs, these communities do not have a faculty member assigned to them. On occasion, the community will invite a faculty member in to present or assist with a program.

Residential Academic Programs

Residential Academic Programs (RAPs) are similar to living-learning communities in that students choose to live in a designated hall based on a shared interest (K. Creamer, personal communication, 2010). RAPs are academically based and are very popular with students. They are coordinated by a faculty member in the content area who will take leadership in the implementation of the program. A staff member, typically the coordinator of the building in which the RAP is housed, will serve as an assistant to the faculty leading the program. Space is limited in RAPs, and there is frequently a waiting list to get into one; students pay a fee of \$800 dollars to participate which helps to offset some of the costs of off-campus programs related to the RAP.

Successes and Future Plans at University of Colorado

John Henderson, Assistant Director of Residence Life for First Year Experience and Assessment, (personal communication, 2010) shared that CU struggles with its budget and assessment. As one of his focus areas is assessment, he is hopeful that they can work to improve the assessment and evaluation of the programs offered. He also shared that CU used to require CU 01, a first year seminar, which was offered in the residence halls until the fall of 2009; he said it was cut for political reasons, and he felt this was a disservice to the students at Colorado. Henderson stated that CU had no early alert system to catch students who might not be connecting with the University, nor do they have a common reading experience. However, CU is working on Flagship 2030, which is a vision that all first year students will be required to live on campus and most upper class students will choose to live at CU; each hall will also have a faculty in residence as part of this vision. Colorado was

making great strides toward Flagship 2030 until recently when budget problems swept higher education and CU as well.

Henderson (personal communication, 2010) also talked about CU's successes. RAPs have enjoyed great success with students and have been called an "innovative way to reach students and build a community of learners" (University of Colorado at Boulder Housing and Dining Services: Residential Academic Programs, 2010). As they look toward the future, CU has plans to bring their summer day and evening orientation programs together by joining their hiring and training processes of student staff members (K. Creamer, personal communication, 2010). This is the first year they will be doing a joint application process, and this is one step toward an effort to bring all first year programs together under a single umbrella.

Colorado State University

Keith Lopez, Coordinator of First & Second Year Programs at Colorado State University said that CSU has a "decentralized approach" to the first year experience (personal communication, 2010). They offer summer orientation for students and families and a welcome week before the start of classes. First year seminars are not a university wide effort, but some colleges are beginning to offer them. Students can choose to participate in a peer mentoring program or Key Communities, which are living-learning communities for traditionally underrepresented groups. In addition, the office of Transitional Programs and Orientation puts on a one day conference in the spring called Getting to Year 2 @ CSU, which is designed to guide students to success in their second year at CSU.

Orientation

Colorado State's Preview program is mandatory for students to aid them in their transition to CSU (Colorado State University: Orientation and Transition Programs). Arrangements can be made to accommodate for extenuating circumstances, but students will not be able to enroll until an admissions representative matriculates them through the system. Parents and family are also welcome to attend and can explore campus or go through an orientation session of their own. At Preview, students will meet with their academic advisor, enroll in classes and learn about CSU culture and opportunities for involvement on campus.

First Year Seminars

Individual colleges at Colorado State University are "protective" of their students, and as a result, University efforts to create a first year seminar class have not been very successful. A pilot program in 2004 was not well received by students or faculty. Though there is no centralized first year seminar, similar classes are "popping up in individual colleges" (K. Lopez, personal communication, 2010) to serve the needs of those colleges and their students.

Peer Mentoring Program

Six years ago, Colorado State began a first year mentoring program that has had great success (K. Lopez, personal communication, 2010). Students can opt into this program that connects them with a group of their peers and an upper-class mentor based on common interests.

Key Communities

Key Communities are living-learning communities for students from traditionally underrepresented groups on campus. Key Academic and Key Service are first year groups,

and students who have participated in these can opt into Key Plus, a second year learning committee reserved for them. Tae Nosaka, Coordinator of Key Communities, shared the history and foundations in an informational interview (personal communication, 2010). She said the communities were created in 1998 in response to a university wide study on retention. Paul Thayer, the current Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Special Advisor to the Provost for Retention, believes that the greatest indicator of an institution's success is to look at the experience of traditionally underrepresented groups. As a key actor in the 1998 assessment, he focused on the experience of students who were ethnically diverse, from lower socioeconomic classes and first-generation students. When the data were controlled for academic preparedness, family support, class load and all other factors, Thayer concluded that these students were not doing as well as their majority counterparts and that overall they reported less satisfaction with their CSU experience. Because Thayer believes that the experience of underrepresented groups is the greatest indicator of the health of the institution, immediate steps were taken to improve these students' experience. One suggestion was to create learning communities, specifically for these students, to help them to transition and succeed academically.

As a result of Thayer's study, the first Key Communities were created in 1998 based on a traditional living-learning community model (T. Nosaka, personal communication, 2010). Students were invited to orientation early and divided into small groups of no more than twenty students so that peer mentors and orientation staff could help ease their transition. The main reasons for small groups were to help staff to know students individually and more personally; with these more genuine and intimate relationships, their hope was to communicate high expectations and support to aid students in meeting those expectations.

Tae Nosaka (personal communication, 2010), the director of Key Communities, explained that the success of Key is due in part to the collaboration Key has with other offices on campus as well as to the constant assessment of their program. Nosaka recognizes that Key would not be a successful program were it not for the space that housing provides, the faculty that choose to be involved and the many other campus resources that assist Key. In addition, Nosaka believes the greatest strength of their program, especially in this time of budget cuts and increasing need, is that they have assessed and reported success every year since the program's inception. Though compiling these reports was never required, Nosaka has made it a priority to check retention and persistence on an annual basis. Students in the program, student staff who work with Key and the faculty who volunteer their time with the program are also surveyed at the end of each program to assess their satisfaction and to gain feedback. They also do focus groups with students who have been out of Key for one year to gain perspectives after having a year to reflect on their experience. These measures, in Nosaka's (personal communication, 2010) opinion, "have saved Key many times." She said the program has never been in danger of being cut, but in a time when the University is facing budget cuts, Key is receiving more money to add a fourth community which she attributes to the fact they have demonstrated their successes and impact repeatedly.

Getting to Year 2 @ CSU

This conference is run through the Office of Transitional Programs and Orientation, in conjunction with the Student Leadership, Involvement and Community Engagement Office on campus. In an interview with Keith Lopez, (personal communication, 2010) Coordinator for Transitional Programs and Orientation, he described the conference as a "proactive measure to combat the things we know second year students struggle with. For

example, choosing a major, time management and internship searching.” When CSU started this program three years ago, it was not realized that the program was unique. But within the twelve schools reviewed in this report, it is the only program of its kind.

The purpose of this one day conference, held in the second semester for first year students, is to give students the tools and resources that they will need to be successful in their second year (K. Lopez, personal communication, 2010). Research suggests that students struggle their second year because the novelty has worn off and they do not feel as valued by the institution as they did in their first year (Cuseo, 2009; Medalie, 1981; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Also, class work in the second year is more demanding, and there is more pressure to choose a major and search for internships.

The conference is a one day event in which several different workshops are presented on topics affecting student success, such as time management, choosing a major and study skills. Students may register for the conference in advance or arrive at the student center the day of and attend those sessions that work with their schedule. While it is encouraged and welcomed, it is not an expectation that students will attend each and every session.

When asked about the outcomes of this program, Lopez (personal communication, 2010) said that students who attend the conference have higher grade point averages and are retained at a higher rate. This data has limitations however, as the students who are likely to attend the conference are also the students who are more likely to be prepared and proactive.

Successes and Future Plans at Colorado State University

Programs succeed at Colorado State University due in large part to the collaboration between offices and the University’s commitment to underrepresented students. The Key Communities have enjoyed success as well because of their collaboration with other offices

and their commitment to assessment. Nosaka (personal communication, 2010) believes that by increasing the retention of traditionally difficult to retain students, Key has shown the University that it is an important program making a difference in students' lives and the overall health of the institution. Having shown its value, the Key program recently received funding to expand and add a fourth Key community, demonstrating CSU's commitment to their first year students and those from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. The Getting to Year 2 @ CSU conference has been successful due to its collaboration with other offices and its creation of opportunities for older student leaders as well as the faculty who encourage and sometimes require their students to attend at least one workshop. Support also comes from Greek Affairs which has started requiring a percentage of its student population to participate, helping both the students who participate and the Greek community with retention and their own academic success.

University of Iowa

The University of Iowa offers several options for first year students to gain familiarity with campus including required one-day orientation sessions and optional, supplemental two-day orientation sessions. Students have a welcome week of activities and opportunities to take first year seminars in person or online, as well as a course that helps guide them through the more personal transition to college. Students are also encouraged to choose a student organization to join, take common courses with their peers and if they live on campus they can opt to participate in a living-learning community.

Orientation

Students and their families are required to attend orientation the summer before they start classes. (University of Iowa: Orientation for First Year Students, 2010). They must attend a one-day session focused on the academic transition, group advising, and enrollment. They can also opt to attend a two-day session which has all the same sessions with the additional opportunity to spend a night in the residence halls, take a walking tour of campus with their peers and current students, and attend a resource fair with their parents. For both options, there is a parallel parent orientation program.

First Year Seminars and Online@Iowa

First Year Seminars are designed to help students adjust to the academic demands at the University of Iowa (University of Iowa: First Year Seminars Academic Information, 2010). They are not required but are available for students who have less than 24 credit hours who want to take the course for one elective credit. Each course is taught by University faculty and has between 15 and 17 students to ensure that each student is receiving individual attention. In addition to the FYS option, students can take Online@Iowa, an online course to acquaint them with the technology available to them at Iowa (University of Iowa: Academic Advising Center Opportunities for Entering First Year Students, 2010).

The College Transition

The College Transition course was started in 2001 as a way for new students to connect with their peers and to share their experiences as they learn together how to navigate life at the University of Iowa (McCray, 2002). Some topics covered include money management, study skills, and academic honesty. University staff who can refer and educate

students on the many resources available to them on campus facilitate the course. An intended outcome of these small classes is to build peer networks, so instructors spend time creating and facilitating group activities to this end. Instructors also encourage students to build relationships with staff and faculty; an example of one assignment is to have students attend a professor's office hours and write about the experience, which helps to build relationships and reduce the stigma and fear students often have surrounding office hours.

Pick One! Program

The University of Iowa (UI) encourages all its students, but especially first year students, to Pick One! (University of Iowa: Pick One! Program, 2010). Because research suggests that involved students do better academically and are more satisfied with their college experience (e.g. Astin, 1977; Braxton, 2003; Kuh, 2007; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989) , UI encourages students to get involved early. The University asks students to register with the Pick One! program with their electronic ID in order to share with which campus group they have become involved.

Courses in Common

Courses in Common (CIC) allows a group of 20 first year students to take up to three classes together (University of Iowa: Academic Advising Center Courses in Common, 2010). Though they will be immersed in a large lecture class, students take comfort in the fact that there are 20 people in the class with whom they share three courses. This program helps students by giving them a structured group of peers with similar classes so they might form study groups and build friendships. According to the University of Iowa's Courses in Common website, "Approximately 95% of students who have provided feedback on their

experience in Courses in Common have said they would recommend courses in common to entering first-year students” (2010).

Living-Learning Communities

Living on campus is not required, but more than half of all first year students at Iowa choose to live in the residence halls (University of Iowa: University Housing Prospective Students, 2010). One option available for students living in hall is to join a living-learning community, a group of students with a shared interest in living in close proximity to one another based on a shared interest that may or may not be academic (University of Iowa: Living-Learning Communities, 2010). These communities are open to second year students and transfer students but are marketed and designed for a first year living population.

Iowa State University

Iowa State University (ISU) offers summer orientation and enrollment days in June, which are not required but are strongly encouraged. ISU also offers a welcome weekend called Destination Iowa State that takes place just before classes begin in August, which allows incoming students to move to campus early and immerse themselves in the campus before they get busy with the fall semester. As part of Destination Iowa State, students are split into small groups based on their residence hall and are given opportunities to interact with one another to start building positive peer relationships early. Students can also choose to participate in learning communities, and many first year students do so.

Orientation and Enrollment

Orientation and enrollment at Iowa State is not required, but strongly encouraged according to the destination Iowa State Coordinator, Sarah Merrill (personal communication,

2010). It consists of a two-day program, focused on the academic transition to Iowa State. If students cannot attend orientation, a representative from the Office of Admissions will work with them to make alternative arrangements so that they can enroll from a distance.

Destination Iowa State

Destination Iowa State is a three-day bridge program that occurs the week before classes begin (S. Merrill, personal communication, 2010). Seventy percent of eligible students choose to attend; participants move into their residence halls on the Thursday before Monday classes begin. They are grouped with approximately twelve other students from their “residential neighborhood” and assigned a team leader to escort them to all scheduled activities and to answer any questions or concerns as they arise. The program has five key components (S. Merrill, 2010):

- 1) Academic Success- These programs are led by faculty and focus on the transition from high school to college; they offer strategies to achieve and maintain good grades.
- 2) Money Management- These programs help students learn how to design and follow a student budget.
- 3) Diversity and Multiculturalism- These programs help to broaden students’ horizons and start exploring issues of diversity and multiculturalism.
- 4) Team Time- This time is set aside at various points throughout the three days for students to process and reflect with their group on their experiences. Team time is facilitated by the groups’ team leader.
- 5) Clone Quest- This program allows teams to get to know Iowa State through a campus-wide scavenger hunt.

Each group will work through all sessions at different times. In addition to these programs, there are late night activities that take place in the residence halls; such programs are strictly social.

Learning Communities

There is no on-campus living requirement at Iowa State, but many first year students choose to live on campus (Iowa State University: Learning Communities Highlights, 2009-2010). Sixty-eight percent of those students participate in one of the 76 learning communities that are offered. Learning communities are based on a common interest that may or may not be academic in nature. While the communities are most popular with first year students, they are open to students of all class standings.

Iowa State University Success and Future Plans

Iowa State has enjoyed great participation in their summer Orientation and Destination Iowa State programs. Like many institutions, ISU encourages student involvement in learning communities; such involvement increases persistence and overall student satisfaction. In a report highlighting the successes of learning communities these results were stated (2009-2010 Learning Communities Highlights, 2010):

- There are 76 learning communities available.
- About 3868 students participate.
- About 68% of LC participants are first year students.
- Retention rates are 8% higher for LC Students (80.5% for non-LC student compared to 88.5% for LC students).
- Six year graduation rates are higher for LC students (74% for LC students compared to 62% for non-LC students).

- Iowa State's learning communities are consistently ranked in US News and World Report's Top 25.
- LC students report higher levels of satisfaction with their ISU experience.
- LC students report higher levels of engagement on the NSSE surveys.

Iowa State plans to continue its programs for first year students and is generally satisfied with their level of service and student satisfaction. Sarah Merrill (personal communication, 2010), Destination Iowa State coordinator, is pleased with their current programs. There is a recognition that they need to continue evolving and improving to remain competitive and also to serve the ever-changing student population and their needs (personal communication, 2010).

University of Oklahoma

The University of Oklahoma (OU) takes a unique approach to first year students. Rather than having summer orientation and enrollment sessions like many of their peer institutions, they do online advising and enrollment. Students are welcome to attend Camp Crimson, a three-day program for students to learn the culture and traditions of OU while networking with other students. As orientation is not during the summer, students arrive to campus four days prior to the start of classes and attend orientation sessions, resource fairs and welcome week activities as part of Orientation Weekend in August. Students are also required to live on campus and have opportunities to participate in special interest housing and live in a hall with a faculty in residence.

Camp Crimson

Camp Crimson is a three day experience for first year students to learn the culture and traditions of the University, but the main purpose is to give new students a feeling of

connection and belonging as a Sooner (University of Oklahoma: Camp Crimson Camp Information, 2010). The cost of camp is \$225, and it covers lodging, meals and activities. When incoming students are surveyed about their Camp Crimson experience, they overwhelmingly state that they feel more prepared to start classes in the fall and have a better sense of connection thanks to all the people they met while at camp. According to their survey results, 94% of campers recommend that incoming students attend Camp Crimson.

Orientation Weekend

At the University of Oklahoma orientation takes place the weekend before school starts and lasts for four days (University of Oklahoma: Student Life Sooner Orientation Weekend, 2010). Orientation at OU is a combination of informational sessions, resource fairs, and welcome week social activities. Students are not required to attend but it is strongly encouraged and popular as it allows them to move in early and become acclimated to their new home.

On-Campus Housing

Living on campus is required for all students who are unmarried and under the age of 20 years old (University of Oklahoma: Housing & Food Service, 2010). Students have a variety of options and can live in traditional style rooms or suite styles that have private baths.

Special Interest Housing

Special Interest Housing is a living-learning community in that students are clustered together based on a shared interest. Examples include a Global Living Community which is focused on multiculturalism and the Academic Arts Community which caters to those who

are interested in learning more about the arts at OU. These are optional but are popular with first year students

Faculty in Residence

The University of Oklahoma is proud to be one of the few public universities that has a faculty in residence program (University of Oklahoma: Housing & Food Service, 2010). By placing faculty members directly in the students' living space, opportunities for genuine and engaging relationships between students and their professors are created. Faculty work with hall staff to plan and take part in hall activities.

Oklahoma State University

Oklahoma State University's (OSU) Office of Orientation is working to become "a one-stop shop for students throughout their time at Oklahoma State" (P. Bahna, personal communication, 2010). Palvih Bahna, Coordinator of Freshmen Programs said the Office's goal is that students will remember their staff as "friendly, welcoming and helpful" so that they will feel comfortable stopping in any time throughout their time at OSU with questions and concerns. There are a few programs currently in place at Oklahoma State to guide first year students, including required Summer Orientation, Camp Cowboy and residential learning communities. Also, all first year students are required to live in University-affiliated housing.

Orientation

Students at Oklahoma State University may choose to attend a one-day session which is academically focused or they may choose an overnight option that which allows them to stay in the residence halls and to gain a fuller experience of what life will be like once they come to campus in the fall. (P. Bahna, personal communication, 2010). Orientation's goals

are to advise and enroll students and to create a sense of belonging and home at OSU for new students.

Camp Cowboy

Camp Cowboy is an extended program offered over five weekends throughout the summer (Oklahoma State University: What it's About, 2010). The program is held near campus and is truly a camp experience for new students to live, learn, and play together. Participants learn OSU traditions and culture while building new friendships and networking with other new students, current students and University staff. Camp Cowboy is not required, but attendance is encouraged and it is a very popular program with students. The cost is \$150 for students, but waivers are available for students who present a need and for legacy students. Oklahoma State also picks up out of state students at the airport the night before camp to make it more accessible for them.

Learning Communities

Learning communities at Oklahoma State are available for students of all class standings and are offered on a variety of topics including Athletic Training, International and Cultural Interests, and Engineering communities for both men and women (Oklahoma State University: Learning Communities and Special Interest Housing, 2010). One option, the FIT Learning Community is for Freshmen in Transition and encourages leadership throughout the first year to help students create a home for themselves at Oklahoma State. The academically focused learning communities have a faculty advisor who volunteers their services and time in order to interact with the floor members.

Successes and Future Plans at Oklahoma State University

Oklahoma State is enjoying success with their current programs. Orientation is the first step in students' transition, and the office takes great pride in being there for students. Camp Cowboy has been in place for ten years, and both Camp Cowboy and learning communities are growing each year. Bahna (personal communication, 2010) said that her goal for the next few years is to increase collaboration among campus office and programs. Though it is a fully functioning system, Bahna would like to see first year programs brought together at OSU.

University of Kansas

The University of Kansas (KU) offers summer orientation, a week of welcome activities, and an optional course to help their first year students adjust to life at KU. Participation in all programs is optional but strongly encouraged by the University staff.

Orientation

Orientation consists of a one day program designed to help students learn more about life at KU (New Student Orientation, 2010). Students who attend will have the opportunity to meet with their academic advisor and other students who are in their intended major, and they will enroll in classes. Students who do not attend orientation are not able to enroll in classes until mid-August, so attendance is strongly encouraged.

Hawk Week

Hawk Week is KU's official welcome to the University for new students (University of Kansas: What is Hawk Week, 2010) and is not required, but it is very popular with students. Hawk Week is a full week of activities with events each day to teach new students the traditions and culture of KU. There is also a one-day session for parents on the first day

of Hawk Week (University of Kansas: Hawk Week Brochure, 2009). Because activities are not scheduled all day, every day, students have time to learn their way around campus and Lawrence, as well as time to buy their text books before upper-classmen arrive and get acclimated to KU. In addition, since there is time each day to process the information, it is more likely they will retain it.

Pre 101

Pre 101 is a non-required course for students who have less than 30 credit hours (University of Kansas: Academic Achievement & Access Center; Pre 101, 2010). This allows students to take the course as early as their first semester or potentially in their first semester of their second year; it is also available to transfer students. The courses are capped at 25 students each to maintain a sense of community. It does not fulfill a graduation requirement, but it is a two credit hour elective course which will help students learn the culture, traditions, diversity and resources available at KU.

Kansas State University

Kansas State University (K-State) currently offers several options to help first year students in their transition to campus. Before students arrive, they are required to attend orientation and enrollment that is offered throughout the month of June (E. Lehning, personal communication, 2010). Students may opt to participate in an extended orientation with an overnight experience called Wildcat Warm-up. Once students arrive, they can choose to take a first year seminar to fulfill a general education requirement or they can take University Experience, a course designed to familiarize students with on-campus resources. Some students will be enrolled in the PILOTs program, which offers structure for the often challenging academic transition. Students also have the option to sign up for the Guide to

Personal Success program which will pair them with a University staff or faculty who will serve as a resource and mentor to them throughout their first year of transition. Though on campus living is not required, approximately 83% of residents are first year students (D. Jackson, personal communication, 2009). These students have the option to live in a Cluster Floor, which is K-State's version of a living-learning community.

Orientation and Enrollment

Orientation and Enrollment days are provided to help students and their families get all the information they need about K-State before they arrive on campus in August (Kansas State University: Orientation & Enrollment, 2010). Emily Lehning, Director of New Student Services, explained that students are required to attend, so that they can be officially matriculated in the University system (personal communication, 2010) and to ensure that they are receiving all the information to help them to be successful at K-State. There are eleven one-day sessions offered in the month of June; students may choose which to attend. Students and families go through separate orientation sessions; the student sessions are geared toward transition, academic success and learning K-State traditions. Parents are offered sessions related to their own parent transitions and have the opportunity to choose from sessions related to financial aid, housing options, Greek Life and other information about the University.

Wildcat Warm-up

Wildcat Warm-up is an extended orientation session for students participating in orientation and enrollment who choose to spend a night in the residence halls with other incoming students and the student staff leaders who are selected to work with Wildcat Warm-up (Kansas State University: Orientation & Enrollment, 2010). Wildcat Warm-up

participants go through the day session of orientation with other orientation and enrollment participants but also spend the night on campus and participate in structured social activities overnight. K-State would like to expand the Wildcat Warm-up program and require first year students to participate; however, this would require more resources from both staff and students. In an effort to remain accessible, the program will most likely remain optional (T. Bauer, personal communication, 2010) though it is working to “sustainably grow” (E. Lehning, personal communication, 2010). There is recognition that the program cannot be required until the office has the means and ability to effectively manage its growth.

First Year Seminar

First year seminars at K-State are offered in the fall semester to aid new students in their academic transition to college. Classes are capped at 22 students to maintain smaller, more intimate learning environments. These classes fulfill a university general education requirement and are taught by dedicated University faculty who volunteer to teach sections of these courses. While students will have greater opportunities to learn about on-campus resources, the intent of the class is to assist students in their academic transition. So, the focus is on reading, writing and critically thinking at the collegiate level. To this end, the coursework is comparable to any other University course.

University Experience

University Experience courses are intended to help students transition into college by giving them awareness of and access to the many resources available to them on campus (Kansas State University: Academic Assistance Center, University Experience, Overview, 2010). These courses are taught by University staff and run as a series of lectures. Some examples of lectures are Sexual Health and Peer Educators (SHAPE), Honesty and Integrity

Peer Educators (HIPE), developing Healthy Habits, and Academic and Career Information Center; the first two are on-campus organizations that practice outreach and education and the second two lectures are led by campus offices. In addition to the instructor and lecture series, the class also has a peer instructor, a student who has demonstrated a commitment to academic success and wants to teach others to be successful in college.

PILOTs Program

The PILOTs program at K-State is a two-semester effort to better retain first year students by providing them with more structure as they transition into college (Kansas State University: PILOTs Program, About PILOTs: An Academic Assistance Program, 2010). The program is an outreach effort for students who are identified through the Office of Admissions as likely to struggle with the transition to K-State; these students can opt out of PILOTs but it is highly recommended that they stay in the program if it is recommended during enrollment. Students in the program are given key academic support in smaller class sizes, a private computer lab and study space with structured studying and tutoring hours, access to faculty and free tutoring and writing assistance. The success of the PILOTs program is seen in the higher retention rates of these students than other University first year students.

Guide to Personal Success

The Guide to Personal Success program, more commonly referred to as GPS, is an effort to help first year students get connected to a faculty or staff mentor on campus (Kansas State University: Guide to Personal Success, For Students, 2010). Research has shown that students who feel connected to a University faculty or administrator are more likely to seek assistance and perform better as a result (e.g. Cuseo, 2009; Schroeder, 2003). With this in

mind, K-State launched GPS in the fall of 2008. GPS mentors are expected to make contact with and meet with their student three times in the first semester and meet two more times in the spring semester. Students are also encouraged to seek out their guide at any time if they have questions or need help and to share their successes and involvement with their guides as well.

Cluster Floors

K-State offers a variety of cluster floors, which are living-learning communities. An Assistant Coordinator for Departmental Initiatives Steph Caron, explained that Cluster Floors are made up of 50-100 students who choose to live in the community based on a shared interest (personal communication, 2010). Interests may be academically based, such as agriculture or architecture, or they can be outside interests such as community service. Participation in the floor varies a great deal based on the faculty sponsor and the commitment of the residence life coordinator of that hall. The goal of cluster floors is to help students build connections with peers and faculty who share a similar interest to help them feel more connected and invested in their experience.

Successes and Future Plans at Kansas State University

Currently K-State has several functioning and successful initiatives for first year students. There is a movement at K-State, led by Emily Lehning, Assistant Vice President for Student Life and Director of New Student Services and Greg Eiselein, Professor of English, to bring all these programs together under a single umbrella to better serve the needs of students (E. Lehning, personal communication, 2009). A task force was put together in 2006 to start this process, but with the changes in leadership including a new president and provost, all plans for new programs had been on hold until this fall when the new University

president was inaugurated and stated his support for a new first year initiative called K-State First. In a recent conversation with Lehning (personal communication, 2010), she outlined several of the initiatives for K-State First which have been approved by the provost, including five CAT Communities, which stands for communicating across topics, and a required common reading for incoming students.

CAT Communities

- The five CAT communities will have different themes, and the students in them will share three courses (E. Lehning, personal communication, 2010). Twenty-two seats will be held in class A, and 22 seats will be held in class B. Furthermore, each student will be connected by a third course, which is the first year seminar course taught by a professor from class A or B to help make the connection between the courses and to the University. In addition, one of these communities will have a residential component in the pre-physical therapy disciplines. Staffing for these communities will include a faculty member who will receive \$1500 in professional development monies; there will also be an undergraduate student working with this professor in the classroom as well to offer a peer perspective. This student will receive \$500 stipend.

Common Reading

- At orientation and enrollment this summer, new students will be receiving a copy of *The Hunger Games* that they will be expected to read (E. Lehning, personal communication, 2010). The Office of New Student Services will work together with the Union Program Council in the fall 2010 semester to offer a variety of programs

related to the book. The goal is to create a conversation about a common book on campus to help students and faculty connect over a single topic.

Overall, all of the researched institutions have shown a commitment to serving the needs of first year students in their transition in some capacity. There are several commonalities and many differences worth exploring. The next chapter will look at these themes and differences in greater detail.

CHAPTER 3 - Emerging Themes, Program Highlights and Recommendations

Kansas State University and the eleven peer institutions reviewed in this report have several things in common relating to first year student services. This section outlines these themes and highlights the particularly interesting and progressive programs while drawing on related theories to explain the rationale for certain programs and initiatives. In general, all programs are related to a great deal of research (Braxton 2003; Tinto, 1986; Tinto, 2003; Tinto & Pusser, 2006; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989) that has shown that student integration into the university will contribute to their success. This involvement can take shape socially or academically. Many programs are based on this theory of involvement and offer opportunities for social and academic integration.

Summer Orientation

All institutions studied offer orientation in some capacity. With the exception of the University of Oklahoma, which has orientation the weekend before classes begin, all orientation sessions are offered over the course of the summer. Only five institutions (Texas A&M, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, CU at Boulder, University of Iowa and K-State) require students to attend, but all institutions strongly encourage it and state that it will help students in their transition both socially and academically.

According to Lehning (personal communication, 2010) from K-State, the orientation and enrollment requirement is to ensure that all students are receiving the same information that will equip them to be successful. This is supported by John M. Braxton's (2003) theory which states the institution must "communicate academic and social rules and regulations

important to students in an effective manner” (p. 331). Research shows that when students are aware of the policies, procedures and potential consequences, they do better overall at the institution (Braxton, 2003; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). In addition, Tinto and Pusser’s (2006) model of institutional action theory suggests it is the responsibility of the university to communicate a culture of expectation to students; orientation is the ideal opportunity for the institution to show its commitment to student learning and engagement.

Many schools offer concurrent parent orientation sessions that help to acclimate parents and other support structures to students’ new environments. This is supported by Schlossberg’s (1995) transition theory, which states that students’ support structures plays a vital role in their ability to adjust. Medalie (1981) also suggested that students must divest from home life while reinvesting in school life. The process of parent orientation can help parents and families in their own transition as students are divesting from home.

Extended Orientation Programs

Extended orientation programs are offered at ten of the institutions reviewed in this report. These programs welcome new students through social activities and programs that teach them about the campus culture. The purpose of these programs is to create a sense of belonging, or to increase students’ cultural capital (Tinto, 1986, as cited in Braxton, 2003), which will help them to feel a greater sense of connection to the institution and to be engaged in student culture. Extended orientation programs may include an overnight stay on campus, like K-State’s Wildcat Warm-up, or they may include a multi-day and night camp-like experience. Baylor University offers Baylor Line Camp, a five-day, four-night program to engage students in the campus culture and to teach them Baylor traditions. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln offers a similar program called Power Up Red Weekend. One distinctive

program at UNL is the N.U.B.E. camp, which is a 24-hour camp for intended engineering majors. Of the schools researched, this is the only summer program sponsored exclusively by one academic department. The engineering students, staff and faculty arrange this program which helps incoming students to gain immediate acceptance and belonging into a traditionally demanding program. The importance of faculty-student interaction (Cuseo, 2009; Davis & Murrell, 1994) cannot be underestimated in the science, technology, engineering, and math fields, which are known for high pressure coursework and a high attrition rates.

One particularly unique approach to orientation is found at the University of Oklahoma; there is no required summer orientation, but students attend an orientation weekend for three days before the start of classes. Over the course of these days, students learn campus culture and traditions, take walking tours of campus, and get information of various clubs and activities available for them to join. This unique approach is one Lehning would like to see at K-State. However, with the rich history of transition and culture of Legacy students it is unlikely this will happen (personal communication, 2010)

First Year Seminars

First year seminar courses are offered at most institutions. A recurring theme in first year seminars is that they are all capped at 25 students or less to maintain a sense of community and intimacy among the students involved. This also allows faculty to give students individual attention and to build more meaningful and lasting relationships with them. In a recent *Chronicle* article, an FYS professor (Lang, 2009) wrote about his experience and said that as a faculty member he also benefited from the close relationships he had built with students in the course; he said the experience of having closeness with

students made him more likely to attend campus events, spend time in residence halls and allowed him to gain perspective over all about life as a first year student. In addition, Cuseo (2009) finds that students who interact with faculty in and out of the classroom, and develop genuine relationships, are more likely to be academically successful.

Many first year seminars are academically focused, count toward general education requirements, and prepare students for the intense academic load they will face in college; these classes are taught by university faculty. Other courses are offered for university elective credit or no credit and focus more on the personal transition to college. These courses, like The Transition Course at Iowa and University Experience at K-State, focus on the personal changes for students and work to build awareness and connection with the many campus resources available to students. Another common feature of courses is to have an undergraduate student working with faculty as a peer mentor and to create projects that have students interacting and engaging with one another. By creating opportunities for engagement the course communicates students' responsibility in the learning process (Davis & Murrell, 1994) that is indicative of a climate of expectation (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). It also allows students the chance to build relationships with their peers thereby creating a support network necessary for success throughout college (Sanford, 1995).

A particularly interesting approach is found at the University of Iowa which offers three unique courses for first year students. One is taught by University faculty and focuses on the changing academic load. The second is taught by University staff and is called the Transition Course; this focuses on the personal changes and campus resources. Iowa's most unique course is called Online@Iowa, which is an online course to prepare new students for the many technologies available to help them succeed at Iowa.

While many schools offer campus wide first year seminars, many colleges within universities prefer to offer their own version of a first-semester course for students who are starting coursework in that college. This is common at K-State and is growing in popularity at Missouri, Colorado, and Colorado State. All of these institutions have offered the university wide course in the past but have discontinued it for various reasons. While many institutions would like to house all first year efforts in one office, there are benefits to each college offering their own orientations, most notably, students will feel a sense of belonging and acceptance within their college. By feeling a sense of belonging, they are more likely to develop competence (Chickering, 1969) and to grow in their environment.

Learning Communities

Learning communities are offered at all institutions studied, and many have both a living component and a classroom component. At their most basic level, all institutions offer a living option for students who share a common interest that may or may not be academic in nature. Some particularly interesting learning communities are found at Baylor, University of Colorado, and University of Missouri. Baylor's communities are called engaged learning communities, and they offer a classroom and living component. Most of these programs are offered in conjunction with a faculty in residence program, so students have several opportunities to connect with faculty outside of the classroom through off-campus programs and residence hall living. Similarly, the University of Colorado has residential academic programs, which are living-learning communities based on shared academic interest and courses. Colorado also connects their programs to faculty partners who often live as faculty in residence. Finally, Missouri is the only institution studied that offers freshmen interest groups in the innovative format piloted by the University of Oregon. These programs are

both popular with students and effective; students report higher levels of satisfaction, and universities see results in grade point averages, retention, and persistence (University of Oregon: First Year Programs, Freshmen Interest Groups, 2007; Wiese, 2010).

Additional Highlights

Some additional programming highlights include the first-year on-campus living requirements, which Nebraska, Missouri, Colorado and Oklahoma have because research has shown that students who live on campus do better academically and socially in college (Schroeder, 2003). Other interesting programs are centered around faculty and student contact beyond the classroom. These programs, at Baylor, Missouri, Colorado and Oklahoma, support students by connecting them with other students and by helping to build genuine relationships with faculty, which has been shown to increase student satisfaction and retention (Cuseo, 2009; Davis & Murrell, 1994) as well as help to create an environment of high expectations (Tinto & Pusser, 2006; J. Wiese, 2010;). It is noteworthy that on these campuses who boast faculty involvement, a culture exists in which faculty are expected to take interest in students outside of the class, and students are willing to engage (J. Wiese, personal communication, 2010); this is currently not the culture at K-State (G. Eiselein, personal communication, 2009). The last program worth highlighting is the Pick One! Program at the University of Iowa which reiterates the importance of campus involvement for students. By asking students to share their involvement with the University through their electronic identification, the institution is able to track those students who might be feeling disconnected: Also, the expectation of involvement (Tinto & Pusser, 2006) is then clearly communicated.

Finally, most schools researched have a desire to bring their first year programs together under a single office (e.g. K. Hall, personal communication, 2010; P. Bahna, personal communication, 2010; Lehning, personal communication, 2009). This is a challenge with larger and decentralized universities where campus offices can be protective of their programs and students at times. In the research, schools that had more centralized campus functions and a climate of collaboration (K. Hall, personal communication, 2010; K. Lopez, personal communication, 2010; J. Wiese, personal communication, 2010) were more successful (Tinto & Pusser, 2006) and seemingly less frustrated with their processes.

Recommendations for K-State

The initial purpose of this report was to explore peer institutions with the goal of offering insight and recommendations for Kansas State University's own first year program. Early in the research, it seemed that an on-campus living requirement would be ideal way to reach out to first-year students and manage the experience they were having at the institution; however, through research, it has been illuminated that many schools do not require students to live on campus and their first-year students are satisfied and successful. In addition, K-State Housing could not support a live-on requirement as the residence halls have been in a state of over-flow housing for three years, as stated by the Associate Director of Housing and Dining Services, Derek Jackson (personal communication, 2009). In addition to the Housing requirement, it was initially thought that a university-wide first year seminar would be a step in the right direction, as well as a freshmen interest group option. Through an informational interview with Emily Lehning, it was outlined that these programs, most notably the freshmen interest groups, which will occur at K-State under the name CAT communities, have been approved and funded for the 2010-2011 academic year. This institutional support

and directive from the president and provost will help to make these programs successful and create a culture of expectation for incoming students (Tinto Pusser, 2006). As K-State moves forward in its commitment to serving first-year students, the recommendations for new programs lessen and take shape in the form of supplemental programs to encourage involvement and support the already existing structures. The new programs, CAT communities and common reading, will help new students connect to peers, staff and faculty.

Additional recommendations for K-State include a revamp of Housing and Dining's cluster floors, which are often overlooked as viable programs to guide students in their transition and an opportunity for casual faculty and staff interaction (S. Caron, personal communication, 2010). An implementation of Iowa's Pick One! Program could be an inexpensive and effective way to communicate an expectation of involvement with students.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report has been to outline various programs comparable to Kansas State University and to provide perspective for K-State's first year program development. It is clear that first year students have unique needs and to fulfill our moral obligation as educators to holistically serve them (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989), it is essential to support these students through program development and resource allocation. Moving forward, it is important to think not only about student retention but also about overall persistence within the higher education system (J. Henderson, personal communication, 2010). Fifty percent of all students will transfer at one point or more in their college career, and as universities work to build first year programs, they must be vigilant about reaching out to transfer students and other frequently overlooked student groups. By investing in first year students, universities

are giving students the tools they need to be successful as they persist through to graduation and move on into the working world.

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Appendix A

Tinto and Pusser's (2006) model of institutional action a figure is shown below. To the left, the student characteristics that they bring with them into the university are shown. Within the circle are all the programs within the institution designed to aid students and create a culture of expectation. The commitment that is outside of the circle is also crucial for the success of students and programmatic efforts. Institutional leadership and commitment to creating a climate of expectation is necessary for any program's success.

Figure A.1 Tinto and Pusser's Model of Institutional Action for Student Success

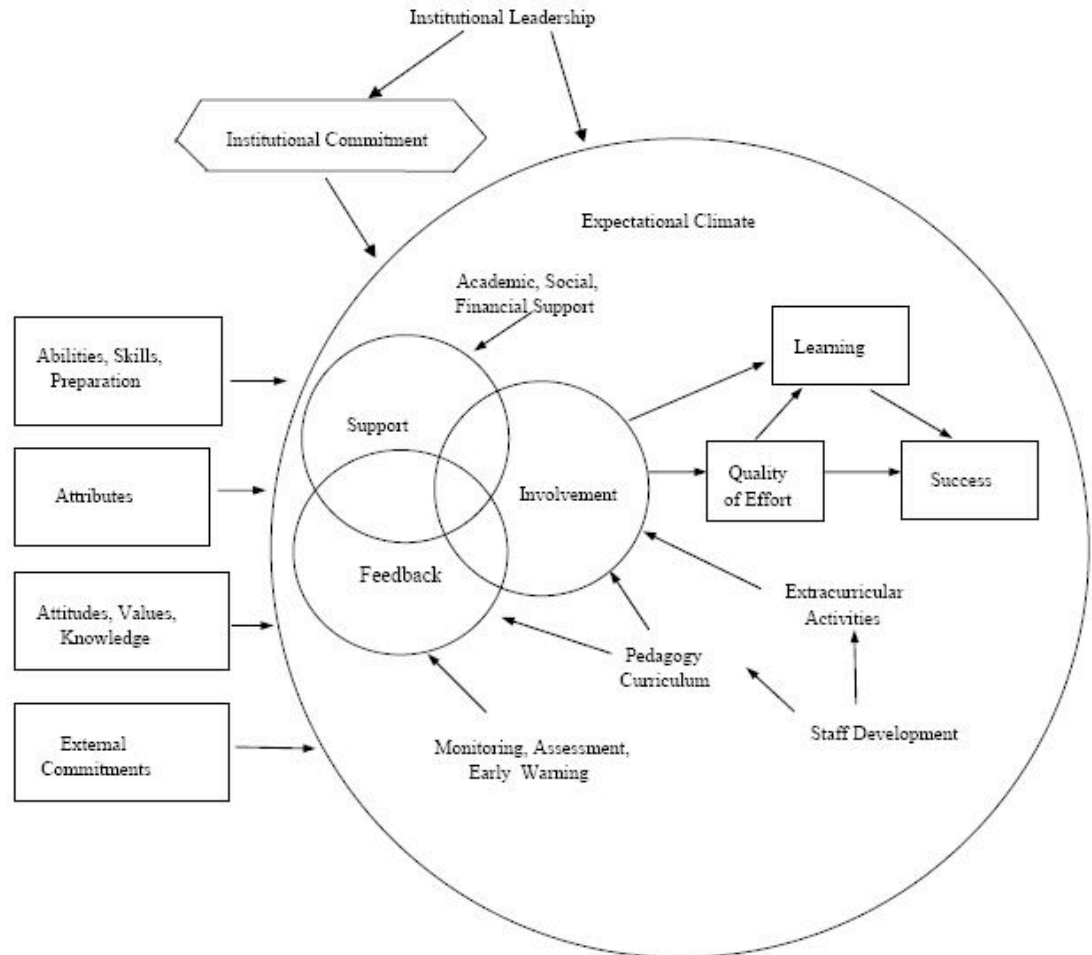


Table A.2 Comparison of programs offered at twelve researched institutions

	<i>Summer Orientation</i>	<i>Extended Orientation</i>	<i>Summer Camps</i>	<i>Welcome Week</i>	<i>University Affiliated Living</i>	<i>Residence Hall Living</i>	<i>First Year Seminar</i>	<i>Living/Learning Communities</i>
Baylor	O	O	O	NA	O	O	R	O
Texas A&M	R	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
UNL	R	O	O	NA	R	R	O	O
Mizzou	O	NA	NA	NA	R	R	O	O
CU Boulder	R	R	NA	O	R	R	NA	O
CSU	O	NA	NA	NA	O	O	NA	O
U. of Iowa	R	O	NA	NA	O	O	O	O
Iowa State	O	O	NA	O	O	O	O	O
U. of OK	NA	NA	O	O	R	R	O	O
OK. State	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
KU	O	NA	NA	O	O	O	O	O
K-state	R	O	NA	O	O	O	O	O

R= Required, O=Offered, NA= Not Available or Not Applicable